

REMARKS

An Office Action was mailed on November 8, 2004. Claims 1 - 20 are pending in the present application. With this response, Applicants cancel claims 4, 11, and 16 without prejudice or disclaimer, and amend claims 1, 7, 13, 19 and 20. No new matter is introduced. Support for the amendments may be found, for example, in Applicants' specification at page 27, line 16 through page 29, line 1.

OBJECTION TO SPECIFICATION

The specification is objected to in regard to informalities. Applicants thank the Examiner for his suggestions for amending the specification to overcome this objection, and amend the specification accordingly. Applicants thereby respectfully request that the objection be withdrawn.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §§ 102,103

Claims 1 – 4, 7 – 11, 13 – 16, 19 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,731,307 to Strubbe et al. Claims 5 and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Strubbe in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,966,691 to Kibre et al. Claims 6, 12 and 18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Strubbe in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,173,260 to Slaney. Applicants cancel claims 4, 11, and 16 without prejudice or disclaimer, and amend claims 1, 7, 13, 19 and 20 to essentially include the limitations of canceled claims

4, 11 and 16 and further clarify the nature of their invention. On this basis, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections.

In amended independent claims 1, 7, 13, 19 and 20, Applicants disclose a method, apparatus and computer-readable program medium for voice procession. In amended independent claim 1, for example, Applicants disclose:

1. A voice processing method comprising the steps of:

detecting a voice tone based on inputted voice information;

determining a plurality of groups corresponding to a plurality of voice data;

classifying the detected voice tone into at least one of the plurality of groups; and

outputting voice data whose voice tone corresponds to the detected voice tone;

wherein the step of outputting voice data outputs voice data corresponding to the at least one group if a count of voice tones classified for the at least one group exceeds a predetermined number.

Strubbe discloses an interaction simulator for analyzing the mental state of a user (see, e.g., abstract of Strubbe). With reference to FIG. 3, the Examiner notes that Strubbe discloses that audio input 245 is received by a microphone and classified by audio classifier 210 and mood/personality classifier 290 (corresponding to Applicants' detecting step). With references to FIG. 5, the Examiner notes that Strubbe discloses that response generator 415 receives a mood/personality state vector produced by mood/personality classifier 290, and selects data from response data store 440 to prepare an output that may be formed by text to speech converter 275 in the form of a voice output (corresponding to Applicants' outputting step).

The Examiner acknowledges that Strubbe fails to disclose classification groups including polite, gentle, general and negligent (see, e.g., Applicants' claim 5), but suggests that Kibre discloses groups based on politeness (see, e.g., column 8, lines 18, 19

of Kibre). The Examiner also acknowledges that Strubbe fails to disclose a system as claimed by Applicants where the inputted voice information is associated with a game player and the voice data corresponds to a game character (see, Applicants' claim 6), but suggests that Slaney discloses a system for automatic speech classification and interactive feedback in a game system (see, e.g., column 1, lines 31 – 41 of Slaney).

However, in sharp contrast to Applicants' invention as claimed in amended independent claim 1, neither Strubbe nor any of the other cited references disclose or suggest Applicants' claimed step for outputting voice data corresponding to a detected tone group if a count of voice tones classified for the detected tone group exceeds a predetermined number (see, e.g., page 27, line 16 through page 29, line 1 of Applicants' specification). In this manner, Applicants' claimed method is able to discriminate a tendency for detected voice tones to correspond with a detected tone group from a random occurrence of voice tones corresponding with the detected tone group. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claim 1 is allowable.

Applicants substantially reapply the above arguments with respect to amended independent claims 7, 13, 19 and 20, and respectfully submit that amended claims 7, 13, 19 and 20 are also allowable on this basis. As dependent claims 2, 3, 5, 8 – 10, 12, 14, 15, 17 and 18 each depend from one of allowable independent claims 1, 7 and 13, Applicants further submit that dependent claims 2, 3, 5, 8 – 10, 12, 14, 15, 17 and 18 are allowable for at least this reason.

CONCLUSION

An earnest effort has been made to be fully responsive to the Examiner's objections. In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is believed that claims 1 – 3, 5 – 10, 12 – 15 and 17 – 20, consisting of independent claims 1, 7, 13, 19 and 20, and the claims dependent therefrom, are in condition for allowance. Passage of this case to allowance is earnestly solicited. However, if for any reason the Examiner should consider this application not to be in condition for allowance, he or she is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the number listed below prior to issuing a further Action.

Any fee due with this paper may be charged on Deposit Account 50-1290.

Respectfully submitted,



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